

December 1, 2004

Surface Transportation Board
Case Control Unit
Washington, D. C. 20423
STB docket No FD 30186 (Sub-No.3)

Sirs:

I first learned about Tongue River Valley coal mines and possible railroads back in the 1970's when I was teaching at the tiny Birney School. Through the 80's, the Tongue River Railroad has been touted as 'necessary' and a great benefit to Montana. Years ago, the TRRC was actually issued a permit to build this 'necessary' railroad. Yet nothing has been done. How necessary can it possibly be?

I suspect you are reading plenty of information from all sorts of people who are firmly opposed to this railroad, familiar with the various impacts it will have, and very knowledgeable about environmental and legal concerns. Just know that I echo the sentiments of such people as Wally McCrae, the Northern Plains Resource Council, Jeanie Alderson, Mark Fix and others more articulate than I.

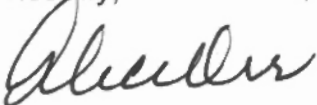
I am concerned about many facets of the TRCC including the EIS draft. It has been many years since the first EIS was completed and there has never been an analysis of the impact on the entire 130 mile route. I question the base line figures. Eg., I am a sensitive receptor. However, according to the EIS, there will be no 'significant' increase in noise. How can this be? Let me assure you, there will be a dramatic increase in noise to this sensitive receptor. I will go from having a quiet so intense that I can be awakened by my refrigerator turning on to having 14 trains daily pass my cabin.

I am very concerned about water and the impact this railroad could have on our aquifers, wells, springs, and our life-giving Tongue River. I am concerned about animal life – wild and domestic and human. I am concerned about the total disregard for our quality of life. I am not willing to sacrifice this idyllic valley and Montana's competitive edge for the financial benefit of a private company and a few individuals.

I cordially invite the members of the Surface Transportation Board to visit my home in Birney, Montana. I have just forty acres on which I plan to retire. I used to live in Washington, D. C. and I know that I never imagined a world such as the Tongue River Country. I would love to have you see what you are dealing with. I believe we would have a better chance of saving this land if you could experience it.

This railroad coupled with possible coal bed methane development will very likely turn the beautiful Tongue River Valley into an industrial waste site. I am so reminded of "How Green was my Valley." There are very few places like the Tongue River Valley left on this planet. Once destroyed, it can never be rehabilitated. Please, please think very hard before you destroy this 'last, best place.'

Sincerely,



Alice Orr
Home-owner and Sensitive Receptor